

## Chapter Two

### Nauvoo: Joseph Meets The Prophet

It must have been heartbreaking to leave the beautiful forest green farm home the Murdocks had worked so long and hard for. Upstate New York is noted for its picturesque farms, and the Murdock farm was one of the best there. Yet so great was Joseph's faith in Joseph Smith and the revealed gospel that he decided to foresake all and join the main body of Saints at Nauvoo. His mother was quite reluctant to leave the comfortable home which had been in their family for generations, but she had seen with her own eyes the miracle of healing performed by the missionary Jonathan Dunham, and knew that if her husband was to be saved from his affliction it was imperative that he be placed in the hands of the Prophet.

Their beautiful home and farm was sold for far less than it was worth and wagons were outfitted for the long journey across New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana to the Mormon mecca at Nauvoo in Illinois. Joseph's father had become so crippled that he was compelled to ride on a bed made in the back of a wagon. The long, hard trip across hills, mountains and rivers must have been very difficult for him, yet he was even more anxious than were the others to reach Nauvoo and meet the Prophet.

John Deans was 18 years old and a great help to Joseph, but Nymphus was only a boy of 9 and could help but little. Betsy and her husband followed the Murdocks to Nauvoo, but family records do not reveal whether she accompanied Joseph or made the long journey at a later date.

Another member of the Murdock party remains a mystery to this day, with only a few brief lines in Joseph's journal to help explain it. He wrote, "I helped a girl get from New York State to Nauvoo. Her father was not willing to let her go. Her name was Jeanette Risell, married to my brother, John Deans Murdock."<sup>(1)</sup> No further mention of Jeanette Risell is ever made, and the mystery is further compounded, for at Nauvoo in 1846 John Deans Murdock married Mary Jane Norris, so far as is known his first and only wife. By reading between the lines we might surmise that Jeanette Risell had been converted to the Mormon faith against her family's wishes, and to get to Nauvoo she ran away from home to accompany the Murdocks. There is no clue how old she was, but John Deans was 18, so it is possible that they were married.

The Murdocks left their home at Hamilton, New York as soon as wagon roads were passable and arrived at Nauvoo in mid-summer. In a biography of Nymphus Murdock it is recorded that the Murdocks left New York in 1840 and went first to Kirtland, Ohio and from there to Nauvoo, arriving in the spring of 1841. The source for that information is not given, but if they did stop at Kirtland for a time, Joseph's journal does not mention it. It is possible, however, for Kirtland was on the trail west from New York.<sup>(2)</sup> Whatever the date of their arrival, after their long journey the fresh new city at the river's edge must have looked to the tired travelers as the "Beautiful

Place" its Hebrew name described. Little is known of the hardships of their trip, although we know that Joseph's father suffered greatly while his mother often regretted leaving her comfortable home. No doubt it was a hard trip for a crippled man and a 64 year old woman.

There may have been some correspondence between Joseph and Joseph Smith or someone else at Nauvoo before they left New York, for it appears that they were expected. Not far from Nauvoo a rider who had to know who they were and that they were traveling to that place met them along the trail, bearing a strange message. Only three days' journey from Nauvoo a courier came to Joseph, telling him that Joseph Smith had sent him to obtain a large sum of money which was desperately needed to save the Prophet's life. It is curious that anyone at Nauvoo would know that the Murdocks were approaching Nauvoo at that exact time or that they would have in their possession a large sum of money from the sale of their home at New York. But Joseph and his family would find Nauvoo a strange place, a city of intrigue, where men of doubtful character covertly sought to breach the Prophet's confidence for their personal gain, while "mobocrats" and assassins of the blackest ilk tried to murder him by the most devious schemes imaginable.

It isn't recorded what Joseph or his father thought about the mysterious rider and his strange message, but Sally, always the thrifty and tight-fisted Yankee sensed something was wrong and told the messenger that she would personally deliver the needed money to the Prophet when they reached Nauvoo. The messenger was not satisfied, but having no choice, rode away.

Nauvoo Hancock Co. Ill. January <sup>the</sup> 24 1844  
Respected cousin after an absence of about two ~~years~~ years, I  
with much pleasure take my Pen in hand to let you know how it is  
with us. I think Mothers health is good for <sup>her age</sup> ~~her age~~ of her age. She is quite  
contented. She says she likes this Country very much. We have ben <sup>believed</sup>  
a kind affectionate and loving Father. We all feel the loss much Sincerely but  
we know he has gone to the World where the every are at rest and the wicked  
are from troubling. he died like a Man of God without a struggle or groan  
and has gon to join the Spirits of the friends he loved, to be parted no more  
forever. he left this World of Sorrow with resigned feelings. We all lament  
his loss allthouh We know our loss is his gone. I will now say a few <sup>words</sup> about  
our affairs here. Father wanted we should keep what ~~what~~ little Property  
we had together as much as possible. he died the 10 of Oct 1843 with fever and  
chills after an illness of 4 weeks. last Winter and Summer his health was  
very good and he took grate pleasure in riding about the City with  
Mother and showing her the different parts thereof. he regained his hearing  
so that he could hear common talk until he died. he said that he was  
glad that he and his family was in Nauvoo. We own one acre and  
3 quarters of land in the City about one half a mile from the Temple east.  
and 25 acres of Prairie and 10 acres of Woodland about 3 miles from the our  
land in the City. We had 120 bush of Wheat 100 bush of Corn 2500 pumpkins  
2 good stacks of Oats that growd on the Prairie besides 100 bush of Potatoes  
growd on our lot in the <sup>city</sup> and on the Prairie. I went to Richmire  
last spring to see our land and pay the taxes. there is some first rate Land there  
and also Water. it is a beautiful Country of Land. I tell you what it is, John if you should  
be on one of those Large Prairies you would think you was out of site of Land. I will  
now tell you about Myself. I enjoy myself first rate. I have ben well since  
I have ben in this state. as for the Proghet, we have had ~~some~~ some times with



him and we find him to be a man of his word. he is very punctual in all his dealings and there is now doubt in my ~~own~~ mind but he is a prophet of God ~~and~~ and a match called to guide the people in this day as Moses was in his day and as for his taking the property of the Saints and converting it to his own use, it is not so. It is like good many other stories that are told about him. I wish you could be here and see for yourself and know and understand for yourself and not for another. I will tell you about your friends in and about this place. Uncle Lambert and Aunt Linda was at our house the other day. they are in good health for them. Alphonso and Betty and Alva Mendenham and ~~and~~ and a Boston Russel and Ferman Ruppel are in ~~good~~ health the last I heard from them. Luella is married to Mr Stodard and lives to Walnut Grove. they are well. E Chapman and family and all your old friends are well as far as I have any knowledge. John and Nymphus and Erastus are well. Erastus says he would like to take a peep into your Siller and get some ~~hides~~ and ~~Apels~~ <sup>the walls of</sup> the Temple is about half completed. it will be a noble edifice when furnished. the Walls of the Temple are to be of cut stone, there is from 19,000 to 20,000 inhabitants in this City. they are emigrating here from the North, South, East, West or from the Islands of the Sea daily. like doves to their ~~windows~~ <sup>different parts of</sup> in flocks they do come. although they come from <sup>different parts of</sup> the Earth and are yost to different customs manners and modes of living, yet they are willing to do the things that are ~~rite~~ <sup>rite</sup> in all and they appear to be of one heart and mind. there is a good many beautiful buildings in this City. there has been about 150 brick buildings put up within our site since we come here and the rest of the City has interest accordingly. we have not had much snow this Winter it has <sup>been</sup> quite mild thus far. I must communicate a few lines to Aunt Sally in poetry through the medium of this letter.

Come listen to a Prophet's voice  
And hear the word of God  
And in the ways of truth rejoice  
And sing the joy abroad

Chorus

1 We've found the way the Prophets went  
Who lived in days before  
Another Prophet now is sent  
This knowledge to restore

2 The gloom of sudden darkness spread  
Through earth's extended space  
We Enlighten'd by your living head  
Great God has shown His face

3 Through using schemes in days that past  
The World has gone astray  
Yet claims of God have stood at last  
The straight and narrow way

4 'Tis not in vain they put their trust  
Or on his arms rely  
Just now accused, all are accused  
Whom Jesus Christ deny

5 The Saviour to his people said  
"Let all my words obey  
And signs shall follow you on earth  
Down to the latest day

6 The Sinner whom the Oil is poured  
And hands in meanness laid  
Are by the power of God restored  
True faith in Jesus name

7 No more in slavish fear we mourn  
The yoke of bondage share  
No more beneath delusion groan  
Our superstitious fear

8 Of every dispensation past  
Of every promise made  
The first be last, the last be first  
The living and the dead

9 Saviors shall to Mount Zion come  
Their thousands bring to rest  
Throughout the great Millennium  
They Eternally be blest Joseph & Murdock

To a Sister, Douglas

Dear Sister it is with deep sympathy that I take my pen in hand to address you one whom I left in deep troubles at my departure. You are one of the best of husbands, and I realize and know how to pity you. We all have been called to pass through the same affliction in a far distant land and know how to feel for you. I went out and again returned but I feel all alone. There is none but God that can give relief and support under my questions. I ought to feel and pleased relief. Therefore I feel to praise the Lord all the day long and rejoice in his Holy Name for he is my King my Redeemer and my all. Tell John to seek the Lord and try to obtain riches and he shall find it all. I would like to see you and John and his family and please give my best love to your family, to your son and family and all your friends in that place. I must close my remarks and asking the Lord to bless you and have mercy on all of you and keep and preserve you. From all harm. Sally & Murdock

Dear friends I will write a few lines to let you know that I am in the land of the living. I am well & like this country very much. I shall be very happy to see all of my friends & acquaintances in that country. Aunt Sally - Mother wants you to get all the names of your ancestors as far back as you can remember - or can get any knowledge that may may be held in remembrance to the latest generation she wants you to write the names and send them to her. Uncle Lambert has lately received a letter from Uncle William Roads and were very happy to hear from them but felt very sorry to hear that Aunt Betsey's health was so poor.

All your friends in this place & together with us do  
unite in sending their love and best respects and ~~good~~  
wishes to your family and also to Uncle William and  
Aunt Betsey and family Uncle H. Cliflet and  
family and all the rest of ~~their~~ friends in that place  
our,  
Emilee M. M. S.

35  
Mrs John Douglass  
35  
East Hamilton  
Madison Co  
NY

JAN 28 1885



Upon their arrival at Nauvoo, Joseph went directly to Joseph Smith's home where he learned that no messenger had been sent, nor could anyone identify the mysterious courier from his description. Joseph's father then offered Smith the money received from the sale of their farm, "To help build up the church", but Joseph Smith refused the offer, saying, "Keep your money, for you can take care of it as well as I can."<sup>(3)</sup> The messenger met along the trail was never seen again, and his unexplained appearance was only a small part of the strange intrigue the Murdocks found between Mormons and gentiles at Nauvoo.

Many stories were circulated at that time claiming that Joseph Smith was encouraging converts to move to Nauvoo so that he could obtain their money and convert it to his own use. In a letter now on file at the Church Historian's Office, written to his cousin, John Douglas at New York on January 24th, 1844, two years after his arrival at Nauvoo and long enough for him to know the workings of the church well and be personally acquainted with the Mormon Prophet, Joseph wrote that such stories were not true. That letter states in part, "As for the Prophet, we have had some times with him and we find him to be a man of his word. He is very punctual in all his dealings and there is no doubt in my mind but he is a Prophet of God and as much called to guide the people in this day as Moses was in his day. As for his taking the property of the Saints and converting it to his own use, it is not so. It is like a good many other stories that are told about him. I wish you could be here and see for yourself, and know"and understand for yourself."<sup>(4)</sup>



Nauvoo Hancock Co. Ill. January <sup>the</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1844  
Respected cousin after an absence of about ~~two or three~~ <sup>two</sup> years, I  
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4 Through using schemes in days that past  
The World has gone astray  
Yet Saints of God have found at last  
The straight and narrow way

5 'Tis not in Man they put their trust  
Or on his arms rely  
Just rest assured, all are accused  
Whom Jesus Christ deny

5 The Savior to his people said  
"Let all my words obey  
And signs shall follow you on earth  
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6 The sick on whom the Oil is poured  
And hands in meanness laid  
Are by the power of God restored  
True faith in Jesus made

7 No more in slavish fear we mourn  
At yoke of bondage stare  
No more beneath delusion groan  
Nor superstitious fear

8 Of every dispensation past  
Of every promise made  
The first be last, the last be first  
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9 Saviors shall to Mount Zion come  
Their thousands bring to rest  
Throughout the great Millennium  
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To Sally Douglass

Dear Sister it is with deep Sympathy that I take my pen in hand to address ~~you~~ one whom I left in deep troubles at my departure. Your father & mother are the best of Husbands, and I realize and know how to pity you. We have all been called to pass through the same affliction in a far distant land and know how to feel for you. I went out and again returned but I felt all loneliness. There is none but God that can give relief and support under my questions. I sought the Lord and obtained relief. Therefore I feel to praise the Lord all the day long and rejoice in his Holy Name for he is my King my Redeemer and my all. Tell John to seek the Lord and try to obtain riches and he shall find it. I would like to see you and John and his family and Abina give my best love to your family, Eliza and family and all my friends in that place. I must close my remarks and asking the Lord to bless you and have mercy on all of you and keep and preserve you. From all mine. Sally Murdock

Dear friends I will write a few lines to let you know that I am in the land of the living. I am well & like this country very much. I shall be very happy to see all of my friends & gentlemen in that country. Aunt Sally - Mother - wants you to get all the names of your ancestors as far back as you can remember - or can get any knowledge that may may be held in remembrance to the latest generation she wanted you to write the names and send them to her. Uncle Lambert has lately received a letter from Uncle William Roads and <sup>his</sup> were very happy to hear from them but felt very sorry to hear that Aunt Betsey's health was so poor.

All your friends in this place together with us do  
unite in sending their love and best respects and good  
wishes to your family and also to Uncle William and  
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family and all the rest of ~~their~~ friends in that place  
our  
Erinice Murt

Mr John Douglass  
25  
28 East Hamilton  
Madison  
Ills  
28



Joseph's father was a very sick man when he arrived at Nauvoo. He had become completely deaf and was unable to stand alone. Doctors had despaired of curing him from what may have been a stroke. No sooner had Joseph met the Prophet than he asked for his help, and he described the Prophet's reply. "Brother Joseph made father a promise in the name of Israel's God that if he would be baptized seven times in the Mississippi River, he would be made whole in one week." Each day for seven days Joseph helped his aged father, then nearly 60 years old, into the waters of the Mississippi where Joseph Smith baptized him and cast out the illness that had so ravaged his frail body, and on the seventh day his father "was made whole again in the time set apart, sound of mind and never to be anymore afflicted in life." Joseph's father left the water strong of limb, clear eyed and sound of mind with his hearing completely restored, which miracle Joseph wrote, "I bear testimony to what I have written as an eye witness."<sup>(5)</sup>

From that miraculous day, Joseph with his wife and family dedicated every working minute to helping the Prophet build up their new church. His father placed all of their money and other worldly wealth at the disposal of the church, in return "to be given an inheritance in Zion." We are not told how much wealth was turned over to the church, but it must have been considerable since it represented the sale of their home and farm and perhaps even their life savings.

Joseph <sup>herdack</sup> soon became close friends with many whose lives would be closely intertwined with his along the long trail to Zion and at

the many missions he would later serve on there. Among them were Daniel Wells, John Pulsipher, Porter Rockwell, John Taylor, William Hickman, Abraham Hunsaker, Hosea Stout, Anson Call, Charles Rich, John Crook and Brigham Young. Joseph worked hard at Nauvoo and in time acquired a small band of sheep, some milch cows and a few horses and oxen. He worked nearly every day on the great temple then being built, and looked with satisfaction as his younger brother Nymphus was baptized in its basement, even while the walls above were still being raised..

He soon became close friends with the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum, and often sat at their feet listening to their counsel and teachings. Though only a boy, Nymphus often worked for the Prophet and later recalled taking many meals at his table. Both Joseph and Nymphus were very close to the Prophet, and in a letter sent to an aunt at New York, Joseph's trust and love for the Prophet is revealed in a poem he enclosed, which later became a well known Mormon hymn.

"Come listen to a Prophet's voice  
And hear the word of God,  
And in the ways of truth rejoice  
And sing for joy abroad.

We've found the way the prophets went  
Who lived in days before,  
Another Phrophe<sup>t</sup> now is sent  
This knowledge to restore.

The gloom of sullen darkness spread  
Through earth's extended space,  
We are enlightened by our living head  
Great God has shown his face.

Through using schemes in days that passed  
The world has gone astray,  
Yet Saints of God have found at last  
The straight and narrow way.

Tis not in men they put their trust  
Or on his arms rely,  
Just rest assured, all are accursed  
Whom Jesus Christ deny.

The savior to his people said  
Let all my children obey,  
And signs shall follow you on earth  
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The sick on whom the oil is poured  
And hands in meekness lain,  
Are by the power of God restored  
Through faith in Jesus' name.

No more in slavish fear we mourn  
No yoke of bondage wear,  
No more beneath delusions groan  
Nor superstitions fear.

Of every dispensation past  
Of every promise made,  
The first be last, the last be first:  
The living and the dead.

Saviors shall to Mount Zion come  
Their thousands bring to rest,  
Throughout the great millennium  
They eternally be blessed."<sup>(6)</sup>

Joseph mentions using his wagon to take Anson Call, Hosea Stout and others to church meetings where they were taught by the Prophet Joseph. Both he and Joseph Smith loved sports, and they often wrestled or ran foot races together. Their friendship was so strong and his love for the Prophet so great that he was honored to be appointed as one of Joseph Smith's personal bodyguards, standing guard "both day and night with my other brethren."<sup>(7)</sup>

Guarding the Prophet constantly was necessary, for Joseph Smith had been the subject of persecution from the time of his first vision, and his followers were pursued by mobs and killed like animals, from New York to Ohio and Missouri and now even at Nauvoo, the city they had claimed from the wilderness with their own sweat and blood. Joseph listened to the Prophet as he addressed the Nauvoo Legion, where he spoke of how he had suffered for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. "From my boyhood I have been hunted like a roe upon the mountains. I have never been allowed to live like other men. I have been driven, chased, stoned and whipped, robbed, mobbed,



imprisoned and persecuted, and falsely accused of everything bad. I have suffered until the Lord knows I have suffered enough." (8)

Guarding the Prophet brought Joseph even closer to both Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and he saw at first-hand the hatred that gentiles had for them. During one public address a mob formed, and Joseph's friend, Circus Canfield, was forced to strike down one of the "mobocrats" to protect the Prophet. Joseph Smith unsheathed his sword before the Nauvoo Legion and declared, "Peace shall commence to leave the people of the earth, and would ten times leave them until it had left them entirely, to rest only with the Latter Day Saints." (9)

On March 21st, 1843 Joseph was ordained a member of the Seventies by Joseph Smith, and on the same day was given a Patriarchal Blessing by Hyrum Smith. In his blessing Joseph was promised "He would leave a great progeny, having seed as numerous as sands of the seashore, and would in time be the means of establishing peace between the settlers and the Indians." (10) Joseph was deeply perplexed, for he and his wife Eunice had no children, nor did it appear they would have any, and Joseph had never even seen a wild Indian. Unknown to him then, time and unknown events would prove all of Hyrum Smith's blessing and prophecy to be true.

Only a few months later, on July 12th, 1843 Joseph Smith wrote out the contents of a revelation restoring the practice of polygamy which he had actually been given in 1831. And even before then he had prophesied "that the Saints would settle in the far west, by the borders of the Lamanites." (11) The revelation of polygamy would

later be the means of Joseph having a large family, while the prophecy of settling near the Lamanites would bring him into close contact with the Indians. But all of that, following years of hardship and strife still was far in the future.

In the fall of 1843 Joseph purchased a farm from Joseph Smith to provide a home for his wife, his brothers and his parents. He continued to work in church affairs and on the new temple, which was growing nearer completion every day. But the same troubles which had plagued the Saints at Ohio and Missouri followed them to Illinois. The Mormons at Nauvoo numbered nearly 15,000, the largest voting bloc in the state, and almost without exception they cast their vote in a single bloc.. Both the Whigs and Democrats sought their vote, knowing that whichever candidate Joseph Smith favored would likely be elected.

Polygamy, then an open secret, greatly concerned their gentile neighbors, as did the Nauvoo Legion, the church's large militia which was allowed under the unique Nauvoo charter, which in effect had created a state within a state..Both were thorns in the sides of the old settlers, who couldn't help but wonder why their Mormon neighbors needed such a large army, second only to the United States army in numbers. They couldn't understand the Mormon's "siege mentality", caused by their many past persecutions. After all the persecutions they had suffered, many Mormons were almost paranoid about their gentile neighbors, and all too often their fears were justified. The original settlers also resented the Mormon's view of the Indians, who they called Lamanites, and their plan to save

them, not exterminate them. But it was the attempted murder of ex-Governor Lilburn Boggs of Missouri that brought the Saints' troubles at Nauvoo to a head.

During their hard times in Missouri, on October 27th, 1838, Governor Boggs had issued his infamous "Extermination Order", directing his state militia that "Your orders are to hasten your operations with all possible speed. The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state for the public peace."<sup>(12)</sup> On May 6th, 1842 someone shot and critically wounded ex-Governor Boggs, and Porter Rockwell, one of Joseph Smith's bodyguards and a close friend of Joseph was suspected of the crime. Hatred for the Mormons grew daily and it appeared that they would be driven from Illinois as they had been from Missouri. And Joseph Murdock, who had traveled to Nauvoo to find peace, found himself right in the middle of the fight.

Nauvoo was fast becoming an armed camp and the center of mob warfare. Joseph Smith's life was threatened daily, making Joseph's job as one of his bodyguards ever more dangerous. Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois, like Governor Boggs of Missouri before him, was demanding that the Saints abandon Nauvoo and leave the state. Armed mobocrats were burning Mormon homes and threatening to destroy their new temple, at that time the largest and finest building in the state. Once more the Saints were suffering the persecutions that had driven them from their homes at Kirtland and Far West.

In 1844 Joseph Smith announced his intentions to run for the office of President of the United States on the Reform Ticket, more

to present the persecutions of the Mormons and their views and beliefs to the public than with any hope of winning the election. He knew it did no good to appeal to Washington for help, for during the earlier persecutions in Missouri he had appealed his people's plight to President Van Buren and was told, "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you. If I take up for you, I shall lose the vote in Missouri."<sup>(13)</sup> Smith hoped that his candidacy would help his people, but it seemed to ignite the flames of suspicion among the gentiles even more.

Open hostilities exploded, resulting in the destruction of the Expositor Press, an especially vitriolic and outspoken gentile newspaper. And each passing day saw more frequent attacks on Mormon homes and business's. Morley's Settlement and Green Plains, both Mormon villages near Nauvoo were totally destroyed, while their residents were stoned, whipped and beaten. An entry in Joseph's journal describes those terrible times. "The mob had taken a sick woman and carried her out of her home, carried her bed out and put her on it and then set fire to her house and burned it down. They then went into her melon patch and were eating her melons when we came along. We came on to them and killed two of them, but the rest got away. This broke up the burning for awhile."<sup>(14)</sup>

In June, 1844 Governor Thomas Ford demanded that Joseph Smith surrender and stand trial for crimes of treason against the State of Illinois. The Prophet knew that he was innocent of any such charge, yet he also knew that so long as the charges remained unresolved, the persecutions of his people would continue. Although his closest



friends and counsellors, including Joseph, urged him not to place himself in the hands of the mob, still he knew he had to do so for his people. When he decided to surrender to the mob, Smith said, "If they had let me alone there would have been no bloodshed, but now I expect to be slaughtered", and to his brother Samuel he added, "I go as a lamb to the slaughter." (15)

On June 24th, 1844 Governor Ford personally guaranteed Smith's safety if he would surrender, and the Prophet with his brother Hyrum and counsellors John Taylor and Willard Richards placed themselves into the hands of the mob and were taken to Carthage jail. While riding towards Carthage Smith had a premonition of his death and the hardships awaiting his followers when he looked about him at the beautiful countryside and said, "This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens. Little do they know the trials that await them!" (16)

Joseph pleaded with the Prophet not to go to Carthage and walked alongside his horse as he was led away by the mob. With tears running down his face Joseph begged to be allowed to go to jail with him. In his journal he recorded, "I went with Brother Joseph on the way to Carthage jail. I went in among the horses and held onto his trousers and begged to go with him. He told me that he thought that if I went others would want to go also. I asked him what lay ahead, and he said, I don't like the looks at all of what lies ahead, I see no light in that direction. My light is in the West. He then told me never to give up on the work of the Latter Day Saints, for it was true, and if they killed him, judgment would come upon this nation. He went to Carthage jail and was murdered." (17)

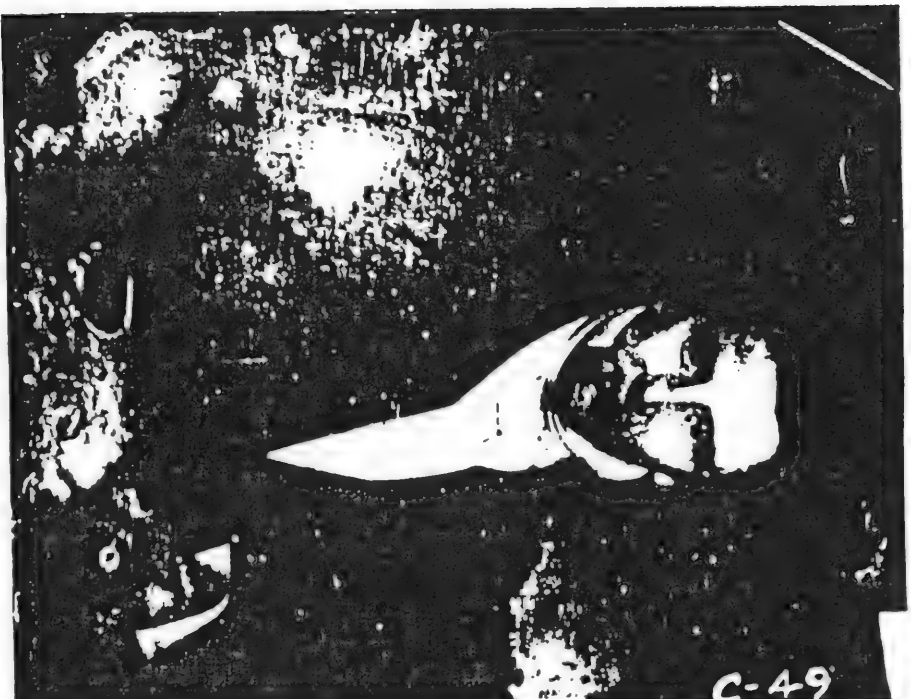
At Carthage there was not enough legal evidence to hold either Joseph or Hyrum Smith, and under the law they might have been allowed to post bail had not Frank Worrell, a leader of the mob, demanded that the constable lock them up. The constable was so intimidated by Worrell and by Levi Williams, a self-proclaimed Colonel in the Warsaw Militia, a fancy name taken by the drunken, half-crazed mob, that he did as he was told. Both Worrell and Williams were local villains of the worst kind. Joseph Smith's mother later described Williams as "A drunken, ignorant, illiterate brute that never had a particle of character or influence until he placed himself at the head of the mob." (18)

After Joseph and Hyrum with their counsellors were jailed, Governor Ford's militia of some 60 men remained outside the jail for a short time, many of them drunk and shouting, "We've got you now Old Joe!" Others in the mob howled like demons from the depths and screamed for Joseph's blood. When their vile language became unbearable, the Prophet appeared at the window of his second floor cell and rebuked them, saying, "I prophesy in the name of the Lord that you shall witness scenes of blood and sorrow to your entire satisfaction. Your souls shall be perfectly satiated with blood, and many of you now present shall have an opportunity to face the cannon's mouth from sources you now think not of, and those people that desire this great evil upon me and my brethren shall be filled with sorrow because of the scenes of desolation and distress that await them!" (19)

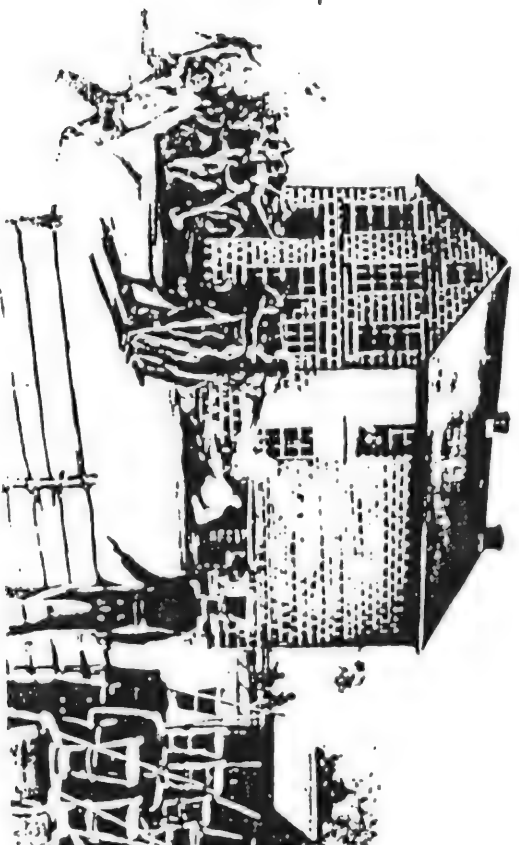
Captain Dan Jones of the Nauvoo Legion had been allowed into the Prophet's prison cell, and after pistol shots were heard outside

he was sent to see what the cause for the shots was. Jones saw that the mob was on the verge of attacking the jail, and he tried to reason with Frank Worrell, who was the mob's leader. Worrell boasted, "We have had too much trouble to bring Old Joe here to let him escape alive. I can prophesy better than Old Joe, and I prophesy that neither he or his brother will live to see the sun set today!" Jones ran to find Governor Ford to stop the mob, but it appeared hopeless, for as he left the jail yard he saw the Governor's militia being dismissed and heard one of them say, "We will return and kill them if we have to tear the jail down!" Jones located Governor Ford and begged him to stop the mob, to which the Governor replied, "Your friends are safe, I have guaranteed it, my people are not that cruel." (20)

Then in violation of his promise, Governor Ford withdrew his state militia, leaving only a handful of the most fanatic Mormon haters to guard the prisoners. No sooner had the militia left than a large mob rushed in and stormed the jail. At 5 P.M., June 27th, 1844 pistol shots exploded through the wooden cell door separating the prisoners from the mob. The first volley of balls fired through the door struck and killed Hyrum Smith almost instantly. A shower of shots poured into the room, five balls striking John Taylor, although miraculously none proved to be fatal. Willard Richards luckily was unhit. A single shot struck the Prophet Joseph in the back, and he fell from the second floor window to the ground below. As he lay dying on the ground, Colonel Levi Williams yelled for his men to kill him, and four of the mob ran to his side and fired their muskets into his body as the Prophet cried out his dying words, as heard by William



Joseph Smith  
 Prophet, Counsellor and friend of  
 Joseph Murdock at Nauvoo  
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James, a gentile spectator who was in the crowd, "O Lord, My God!" (21)

Frank Worrell, drunk, barefooted and with his face blackened sprang upon Smith's body as life oozed from it and dragged it against a well, where he raised his hand holding a large bowie knife to cut off the head of the murdered Prophet. Just then the black clouds in the overcast sky above suddenly parted and a brilliant shaft of sunlight shone down on the bloody scene, like an accusing finger of guilt pointing from the heavens at Worrell beside the fallen Prophet. Worrell raised his eyes to the heavens, a look of terror on his face. His arm appeared to be frozen, while his knife fell harmlessly to the ground. The bodies of the four murderers who had just fired balls into the Prophet's body stood frozen like marble statues as their rifles slipped from their hands. The mob was silenced in an instant at the terrifying scene before them, and one by one they slunk off into the night. (22)

With the Prophet's death, Joseph's world seemed to end. He had lost not only a religious leader and revelator but also a personal friend and counsellor. The hectic days that followed proved to be a real test of courage and faith for both he and his family. Joseph was busy both day and night clearing his new farm and caring for his family, while becoming even more involved in church affairs and standing guard at the new temple. Then unexpectedly another crisis came to test his faith, for on October 9th, 1844 his father died. It was a terrible shock to Joseph and all of his family, and it caused an immediate crisis in their lives, for it had been his father's illness that had brought them to Nauvoo, and with his passing part of their reason for being there seemed to be gone also.

Sally had never completely shared her husband's zealous faith in the church, and had especially questioned placing their money in the hands of the Prophet in order to gain some uncertain "inheritance in Zion". She wondered why the Murdocks couldn't be just as devout in their faith at their comfortable farm in New York as they could on the new, raw land at Nauvoo. She had received a tempting offer of choice farm land and financial help from her family if she would return to New York, and she longed to return to her family and friends. But her husband had always refused, knowing that their place was with the Saints on the Mormon frontier.

After her husband's death, Sally took 11 year old Nymphus, her only unmarried son, and with their personal possessions boarded a river boat to begin the long trip down the Mississippi and then by sea back to her old home. Joseph was beside himself with grief, but felt that he was powerless to stop her. But only one day's travel from Nauvoo something happened that changed Sally's entire life as well as the lives of all of her family.

That night Sally was visited by a vision of her husband, and Nymphus later testified that his father appeared before them. Joseph Murdock Sr. appeared before Sally and asked, "Where are you going? You gave me your promise that you would see our son Nymphus raised in the church and go with its body to Zion!" At dawn's first light Sally left the river boat and with Nymphus made her way back to Nauvoo. She wouldn't tell Joseph why she had returned, but later did tell him of seeing his father's spirit and hearing his voice. Later Nymphus testified to the truth of what she had revealed. Once more

the family was united, for Sally never again questioned the truth of her Mormon faith.(23)

Persecution of the Saints increased daily, and with both Joseph and Hyrum dead, many pretenders stepped forth to seize the leadership of the church, but only one was given the keys to that authority. In his journal Joseph described the transfer of authority. In a grove of trees just east of the temple several speakers stood to make their claim, but when Brigham Young, President Of The Council Of The Twelve spoke, everyone listening felt the presence of Joseph Smith. "I saw Brigham Young transformed into the image of Joseph Smith. His features were the features of Joseph, and he spoke with the voice of the Prophet, the teeth out of the mouth that the mob had broken from Joseph when they murdered him. I actually saw and testify that I heard Joseph's voice place the calling of this great work upon the Twelve Apostles with Brigham Young at their head." (24) Joseph never tired of telling how he witnessed the mantle of Joseph Smith descend onto Brigham Young, and in later years often bore testimony to that wonderful event.

On January 29th, 1845 a Quorum Of The Seventies meeting was held at Joseph Murdock's home at Nauvoo. Attending were Brigham Young, Hosea Stout, Jesse Harmon, Alvin Hair, Waldo Littlefield, Alfred Brown, Jonathan Browning and President William Cutler. At that meeting Joseph Murdock was ordained a Presiding Elder under the hand of Brigham Young, Jesse Harmon and Hosea Stout. (25) Besides matters of church doctrine, the Quorum discussed the increasing persecutions and mob violence at Nauvoo, and agreed that the Saints

would soon have to abandon their beautiful city to their enemies. It was a difficult decision to reach after the great labor they had performed transforming an unwanted mosquito infested swamp into the largest and finest city in the state, but there seemed to be no other way, for Governor Ford had revoked the city's charter only a few days earlier and already human jackals anxious to seize the city were circling for the kill like a pack of hungry wolves.

There was no doubt in Brigham Young's mind what the Saint's next move must be, for he had studied Joseph Smith's revelations and prophecies well. As early as 1831 Joseph Smith had prophesied that the Saints would one day settle "In the far west, by the borders of the Lamanites."<sup>(26)</sup> In July, 1843 he again told of a vision he had of the Saints moving to the Rocky Mountains and several months later he dispatched Jonathan Dunham, the same missionary who had baptized Joseph and his family only a few years earlier, to explore a route to the Missouri River and west perhaps as far as California. Even then the Prophet was making plans for a westward move after the temple at Nauvoo was completed.<sup>(27)</sup>

On February 20th, 1844, only four months before his death, Smith had formed a group whose purpose was "To hunt out a location where we can remove to after the temple is completed and where we can build a city in a day, and have a government of our own, up in the mountains where the devil himself cannot dig us out, and live in a healthful climate, where we can live as long as we have a mind to."<sup>(28)</sup>

Joseph Smith had planned a Rocky Mountain sanctuary for the Saints, realizing it was the only place where they could be safe

from mobs and free to practice their religion. To build a city in a day would require a place completely away from other people or their influence. To have a government of their own would require a separation from United States control, and a sanctuary in the Rocky Mountains, then Mexican territory would allow such a government. There not even the devil, their enemies of Missouri and Illinois, could dig them out or get to them. Smith knew from stories brought back by explorers that the climate there would be a healthful one, unlike the swamps of the Mississippi Valley, and the longevity of the Latter Day Saints in their mountain home has certainly vindicated his prophecy of living a long, full life there. Later events would reveal that under Brigham Young's leadership the Saints would emigrate to a choice land already seen in vision by Joseph Smith. The move would come sooner than any could expect, for on September 9th, 1845 the church's Council Of Fifty resolved that an exploring company should be selected to go to the Great Salt Lake Valley to gather information relative to emmigration there. (29)

It had been more than a year since that awful day at Carthage when the raised arm of the fiend Worrell had been for a moment turned to stone as he sought to sever the head of Joseph Smith from his body. Since that time Worrell and Levi Williams had often led the mobs as they whipped and burned and killed. During those terrible days, Sheriff J.B. Backenstos tried in vain to uphold the law and protect the Saints. Finally the mobs turned on the sheriff and threatened both him and his family with violence. On September 16th, 1845 Sheriff Backenstos began moving his family out of Nauvoo, but he

was seen and followed by an armed mob on horseback. The sheriff and his family were racing for their lives when they came upon a band of Mormons using their wagons to haul some neighbor's possessions whose homes had been burned. Among them were Joseph Murdock, Porter Rockwell and Peter Conover. Sheriff Backenstos called to them for help as one of the riders raced up close behind him. Porter Rockwell knelt to aim his rifle and then fired a single shot. His bullet struck the rider dead center on his belt buckle, and he was knocked from his horse and fell to the ground dead. That rider proved to be Frank Worrell, the man who tried to cut off the Prophet's head after he was murdered at Carthage. (30) The fiend of Carthage prison was dead, and Joseph and those who had witnessed his death couldn't help but think, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

Meanwhile the great Nauvoo temple was completed, and Joseph helped guard it while howling mobs swore to tear it down. Even though their world seemed to be coming apart, Joseph and his family continued to labor in the work of the Lord. On January 25th, 1845 Joseph's brother John Deans Murdock married Mary Jane Norris in the new Nauvoo temple. We know not what, if anything, happened to Jeanette Risell, according to Joseph's journal the girl John Deans married at New York.

But an even stranger mystery was in the making, for John's new wife had a brother in New York State, Benny Norris, then only 7 years old, who came with his parents to Nauvoo to be with his sister. His father, David Norris, was a blacksmith at Nauvoo, and during the fighting there in September, 1846 he was killed while defending the



city from the mobs who were burning it. Mrs. Norris died during the exodus from Nauvoo, leaving poor Benny to fend for himself, since his sister and her husband John Deans had already fled the burning city.

Young Benny Norris became just another of the homeless thousands wandering hungry and alone on the frozen prairie. But he knew his sister had moved west, and somehow he set out to find her, and against all odds he succeeded. The story of Benny Norris and his life with the Murdocks was destined to be as strange a tale as any ever heard on the frontier.

## Footnotes - Chapter 2

1. Journal JSM
2. Prominent Men Of Utah, National Historical Record, Chicago, 1902
3. Handwritten manuscript by Ida Kirkham, DUP, at Utah State Historical Society.
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5. Journal JSM
6. Ibid Footnote #4 above.
7. Journal JSM
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9. Journal JSM
10. Ibid
11. The Mormon Trek West, Pg 19, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1980, Joseph Brown
12. History of the Church, Vol 3, Pg 168
13. Essentials In Church History, Pg 242, Jos. F. Smith, Deseret Book, SLC, 1950.
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19. The Mormon Trek West, Pg 30 (Ibid Footnote #11 above)
20. Essentials In Church History, Pg 313 (Ibid Footnote #13)

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21. No Man Knows My History, The Life Of Joseph Smith, Pg 394, Fawn Brodie, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1945.
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29. History Of The Church, Pg 379
30. Diary of Peter Conover, Utah State Historical Society, and The Carthage Conspiracy, Pg 195, Dallas Oaks, University of Illinois Press, 1975.